

September 25, 2000

MEMORANDUM

TO: Mr. Dalton B. Floyd, Jr., Chairman  
Commission on Higher Education

FROM: Ms. Susan Cole, Chair  
Committee on Access & Equity and Student Services

**Informational Report**  
**1998-2000 LIFE Scholarship Program**

**Background**

The LIFE Scholarship program was approved by the General Assembly during the 1998 legislative session and was signed into law on Friday, June 19, 1998. The LIFE Scholarship Bill authorized funding for scholarships in the amount of two thousand to eligible students attending four-year public and independent colleges and universities, and scholarships in the amount of one thousand to eligible students attending two-year public and independent colleges and universities in South Carolina.

As defined by the General Assembly, the goals of the LIFE Scholarship Program are to: increase access to higher education, improve the employability of South Carolina's students so as to attract business to the State, provide incentives for students to be better prepared for college, improve SAT scores, and graduate from college on time. The Bill authorized the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education (CHE) to create regulations for administration of the LIFE Scholarship program and establish procedures to administer the provision of the Statute.

In June 1998, the CHE invited institutional representatives from all 55 LIFE eligible institutions to participate in development of the LIFE Scholarship regulations. The first meeting was held on June 22, 1998. Subsequent meetings occurred on July 7, August 24, September 25 and October 27, 1999. The LIFE Scholarship committee had a very short period of time to construct and implement the regulations as the first awards were made in the Fall 1998 semester. Minor revisions to the regulations occurred between October and December 1998. The CHE reviewed and approved the regulations on January 7, 1999.

The regulations have been under review in the South Carolina General Assembly since January 1999. Due to legislative amendments, in fall 2000, the Student Services Division will move forward with revising the regulations.

### **Eligibility Criteria**

Students who graduated in 1998 and 1999 were required to have a 1000 SAT (21 ACT) and a 3.0 grade point average. Students who graduate in 2000 and 2001 are required to have a 1050 SAT (22 ACT) and a 3.0 grade point average. Students who graduate in or after 2002 are required to have a 1100 SAT (24 ACT). Once a student enters college they may renew or gain eligibility each academic year by:

- Meeting all general eligibility criteria;
- Earning an average of 30 credit hours for each academic year (Fall, Spring, Summer) equaling a minimum of 30 credit hours if a rising second year student, 60 credit hours if a rising third year student, or 90 hours if a rising fourth year student;
- Earn a minimum 3.0 grade point average on a 4.0 scale by the end of the academic year (Fall, Spring, Summer); and
- Enrolling as a degree-seeking undergraduate student.

### **Executive Summary**

#### ***Students Awarded***

Students were awarded the scholarship beginning in fall 1998. In the 1998-1999 academic year, 15,165 students were awarded, totaling 27.1 million. In 1999-2000, 17,028 students were awarded, totaling 30.3 million. A total of 24,773 students have been awarded the LIFE Scholarship since it began in 1998. The following is a summary of the number of students and funds at the institutions:

Academic Year	Institution Type	Students	Funding
1998-1999	Senior Public	10,213	19,632,796
	Two-Year Regional of USC	312	287,717
	Technical Colleges	1,485	1,250,250
	Senior Private	3,079	5,914,063
	Two-Year Private	76	72,500
Total		15,165	27,157,327

Academic Year	Institution Type	Students	Funding
1999-2000	Senior Public	11,435	21,841,407
	Two-Year Regional of USC	451	410,689
	Technical	1,601	1,415,811
	Senior Private	3,466	6,644,168
	Two-Year Private	75	69,500
Total		17,028	30,381,576

### ***Racial Summary***

1998

Non Resident Alien	Black/ African-American	Amer. Ind./ Alask Nat.	Asian/ Pac. Island	Hispanic	White/ Non-Hispanic	Unknown
0.11%	13.08%	0.17%	1.91%	0.73%	83.36%	0.64%

1999

Non Resident Alien	Black/ African-American	Amer. Ind./ Alask Nat.	Asian/ Pac. Island	Hispanic	White/ Non-Hispanic	Unknown
3.01%	12.16%	0.18%	1.66%	0.82%	78.16%	4.02%

### ***Student Level***

1998

Freshmen	Sophomores	Juniors	Seniors	Unknown
43.4%	21.7%	17.2%	16.5%	1.0%

1999

Freshmen	Sophomores	Juniors	Seniors	Unknown
42.7%	21.4%	18.3%	18.0%	1.0%

### ***Retention***

Students receiving the scholarship in fall 1998 retained the scholarship in fall 1999 at a rate of 59.6%. First-time entering freshman in fall 1998 retained the scholarship in fall 1999 at a rate of 43.5% as compared to sophomores, 76.3% and juniors, 78.9%. The lower retention rate among freshman is likely due to the unique college adjustment issues they confront.

	Retained at Same Institution			
Institution	Freshman	Sophomore	Junior	Total
Senior Public	43.2%	73.2%	75.0%	59.0%
Two-Year Regional of USC	31.8%	0	0	31.8%
Technical	16.5%	0	0	16.5%
Senior Private	50.2%	75.9%	84.8%	66.2%
Two-Year Private	47.7%	0	0	47.7%
Sub Total	40.7%	73.9%	77.2%	57.1%
Including students who transferred from originating institution to another institution in the State and retained LIFE. The Grand Total is:	<b>43.5%</b>	<b>76.3%</b>	<b>78.9%</b>	<b>59.6%</b>

See Attachment I. for a LIFE Scholarship retention breakout for the eligible institutions.

### **Legislative Changes**

During the 1999 and 2000 Legislative sessions, the General Assembly made several amendments to the LIFE Scholarship Statute:

1. The STAR Coursework requirement is repealed as a LIFE Scholarship eligibility criterion.
2. The LIFE Scholarship certificate requirement is repealed. Therefore, students no longer have to be recognized by a certificate.
3. The LIFE Scholarship award amount is increased to \$3,000 per year at any four-year, in-state college or university (half dispersed in Fall and Spring) and cost of tuition and fees per year for thirty credit hours or its equivalent at any two-year, in-state college or technical college (half dispersed in Fall and Spring).
4. Students who have been adjudicated delinquent or have been convicted or pled guilty or *nolo contendere* to an alcohol- or drug-related misdemeanor offense are ineligible for the scholarship for one academic year after the adjudication, conviction, or plea occurred. The student will lose eligibility at the beginning of the next academic year of scholarship eligibility, immediately following conviction and lose the scholarship for the fall and spring terms.

### **Summary**

The LIFE Scholarship program continues to grow as more students prepare to meet the eligibility criteria. In addition, high schools and colleges have become more effective and efficient at communicating the eligibility criteria and administering the program. Further research is to be conducted to determine the affect of the LIFE Scholarship on enrollment in South Carolina institutions and the reasons why the scholarship is not retained.